Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Indicator 5.5.1(a): Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments

# Institutional information

## Organization(s):

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

# Concepts and definitions

## Definition:

The proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments, currently as at 1 January of reporting year, is currently measured as the number of seats held by women members in single or lower chambers of national parliaments, expressed as a percentage of all occupied seats.

National parliaments can be bicameral or unicameral. This indicator covers the single chamber in unicameral parliaments and the lower chamber in bicameral parliaments. It does not cover the upper chamber of bicameral parliaments. Seats are usually won by members in general parliamentary elections. Seats may also be filled by nomination, appointment, indirect election, rotation of members and by-election.

Seats refer to the number of parliamentary mandates, or the number of members of parliament.

## Concepts:

Seats refer to the number of parliamentary mandates, also known as the number of members of parliament. Seats are usually won by members in general parliamentary elections. Seats may also be filled by nomination, appointment, indirect election, rotation of members and by-election.

## Rationale:

The indicator measures the degree to which women have equal access to parliamentary decision making. Women's participation in parliaments is a key aspect of women's opportunities in political and public life, and is therefore linked to women's empowerment. Equal numbers of women and men in lower chambers would give an indicator value of 50 per cent.

A stronger presence of women in parliament allows new concerns to be highlighted on political agendas, and new priorities to be put into practice through the adoption and implementation of policies and laws. The inclusion of the perspectives and interests of women is a prerequisite for democracy and gender equality, and contributes to good governance. A representative parliament also

allows the different experiences of men and women to affect the social, political and economic future of societies.

Changes in the indicator have been tracked over time. Although the international community has supported and promoted women's participation in political decision-making structures for several decades, improvement in women's access to parliament has been slow. This has led to the introduction of special policy and legal measures to increase women's shares of parliamentary seats in several countries. Those countries that have adopted special measures generally have greater representation of women in parliament than countries without special measures.

## Comments and limitations:

- The number of countries covered varies with suspensions or dissolutions of parliaments. As of 1 February 2016, 193 countries are included.
- There can be difficulties in obtaining information on by-election results and replacements due to death or resignation. These changes are ad hoc events which are more difficult to keep track of. By-elections, for instance, are often not announced internationally as general elections are.
- The data excludes the numbers and percentages of women in upper chambers of parliament. The information in available on the IPU website at http://www.ipu.org/women-ranking
- Parliaments vary considerably in their internal workings and procedures, however, generally legislate, oversee government and represent the electorate. In terms of measuring women's contribution to political decision making, this indicator may not be sufficient because some women may face obstacles in fully and efficiently carrying out their parliamentary mandate.

# Methodology

## Computation method:

The proportion of seats held by women in national parliament is derived by dividing the total number of seats occupied by women by the total number of seats in parliament.

There is no weighting or normalising of statistics.

## Treatment of missing values:

No adjustments are made for missing values.

## Sources of discrepancies:

Data are not adjusted for international comparability. Though, for international comparisons, generally only the single or lower house is considered in calculating the indicator.

# Data sources

## Description:

The data used are official statistics received from parliaments.

## Collection process:

The data are provided by national parliaments and updated after an election or parliamentary renewal. National parliaments also transmit their data to the IPU at least once a year and when the numbers change significantly. IPU member parliaments provide information on changes and updates to the IPU secretariat. After each general election or renewal a questionnaire is dispatched to parliaments to solicit the latest available data. If no response is provided, other methods are used to obtain the information, such as from the electoral management body, parliamentary web sites or Internet searches. Additional information gathered from other sources is regularly crosschecked with parliament.

# Data availability

## Description:

Data are available for 193 countries. Information is available in all countries where a national legislature exists and therefore does not include parliaments that have been dissolved or suspended for an indefinite period.

## Time series:

According to IPU website the data extraction has changed over time as follows;

2020 – Present: As at 1 January

2013 – 2019: As at 1 February

1999: As at 5 February

2002: As at 4 February

2003, 2005 – 2007, 2009 – 2012: As at 31 January

2001, 2004: As at 30 January

2008: As at 29 January

1998, 2000: As at 25 January

1997: As at 1 January

Prior to 1997: Unknown

## Disaggregation:

The indicator can be disaggregated for analysis by geographical region and sub-region, legislature type (single or lower, parliamentary or presidential), the method of filling seats (directly elected, indirectly elected, appointed) and the use of special measures.

# Calendar

### Data collection:

Data are updated on a monthly basis, up to the last day of the month.

### Data release:

Data are updated on a monthly basis, up to the last day of the month.

# Data providers

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) member parliaments

# Data compilers

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

# References

### URL:

https://data/ipu.org/women-ranking

http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm

### References:

Inter-parliamentary Union (2008). Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments. Geneva. Available from http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#equality08.

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United Nations Development Fund For Women (2009). Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009. New York. Available from http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008. UN-Women (2011).

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# Related indicators of February 2020

Indicator 16.7.1: Proportions of positions (by age group, sex, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local), including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service;

and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions.